

BUDDHIST SERIES



MAHA'S ATTACK AND TEMPTATION

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Nag-Vij

SARJUNAKONDA



# NAGARJUNAKONDA

BY

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## Introduction

The year is 1956 : the month April. This is the 2500th year after the *Parinirvana* of the Buddha.

The place is Nagarjunakonda, in the district of Guntur in the State of Andhra, India.

At this time of the year Nagarjunakonda is hot during the day, but the nights are cool and pleasant and one sleeps in the open under the stars.

Nearly deserted, Nagarjunakonda is almost a desolate place, today. In the third century A.D., however, it was one of the busiest towns in the whole of India. What a contrast !

In this arid valley there live today a handful of Telugus, Lambadis, Sugalis, Chippis and Chenchus. The Lambadis are a nomadic tribe. Fleeing from a northern region in the face of invaders, they settled down along the banks of the river Krishna, centuries ago. Sugalis and Chenchus are also gypsy tribes. Chenchus are skilled archers. Besides these, and giving them regular employment is the small but active colony of archaeological and epigraphical experts, excavators, photographers, foremen and their assistants.

Thanks to the work of archaeologists, both British and Indian, and their unremitting labour during the last thirty years, we are able to draw a picture of Nagarjunakonda and of the lower Krishna valley generally as it was from 200 B. C. to 300 A. D. If there is one aspect



#### THE DESCENT OF THE BODHISATTVA AS A WHITE ELEPHANT

of the Indo-British association which can be viewed with satisfaction and without reservation it is that pertaining to the excavation and preservation of ancient sites.

In 1926 Nagarjunakonda was hardly known. The nearest important village was Macherla, fourteen miles away, and the nearest railway station at Guntur, ninety-four miles away. Nagarjunakonda, was a malarial spot with only a few huts. That year a school-teacher of Macherla, Sri Surapuraja Venkataramayya, wandering farther afield than was his wont, came upon what looked like a piece of statuary. He communicated his "discovery" to the Government of Madras which deputed Mr. Rangaswami

Saraswati, Telugu Epigraphical Assistant, to make investigations. On his report Mr. A. H. Longhurst, Regional Director of Archaeology, went to Nagarjunakonda and spent ten months there making preliminary surveys (ground-work) and excavations. During his absence on leave, the work was continued by Mr Hamid Kuraishi. On return from leave, Mr. Longhurst set about the task of exploring and excavating the vast valley of Nagarjunakonda; and it was mainly the result of his labour from 1927 to 1931 that Nagarjunakonda became known. In 1931, the railway line was extended to Macherla thus bringing Nagarjunakonda within fourteen miles of the railway terminus.

Today, Macherla is quite a township and is served both by rail and road. When Rangaswami Saraswati trekked to Nagarjunakonda in 1926 he had to travel from Macherla to Nogulavaram by a bullock cart. The last six miles had to be covered on foot with porters carrying his bedding, tent and articles of food. Mr. Longhurst also travelled in the same way. Today, there is a bus service for ordinary folk, and the well-to-do can reach Nagarjunakonda by high-power limousines.

This ancient site has a travellers' bungalow, a *pucca* Superintendent's bungalow on a hill named Sri Parvata, hallowed by Nagarjuna himself. It is occupied by the Curator of the Museum and is also used by touring officials. Among the other buildings are the Museum, houses for the subordinate staff, a restaurant, several tents, and all the appurtenances of a township.

Two thousand years is a long time, and what dynastic wars and vandals left undone has been completed by the

ravages of time.

The Andhra country must have been one of the most-favoured of the Gods then. Its four-hundred-mile long coast was dotted with ports; and there were several river-ports as well. Ancient books such as the *Aitareya Brahmana* and the *Puranas* mention Andhra and the Andhras. They are also referred to by Megasthenes.

Megasthenes (300 B.C.) and Pliny (77 A.D.) describe the might of the Andhras, their thirty fortified towns, their armies consisting of 1,00,000 foot and 2,000 mounted soldiers and 1,000 elephants. The ports of Andhra and the rare exports of the country are referred to in the *Periplus of the Erythraen Sea*\* (first century A.D.).

The most frequent references to Andhra and the towns of the lower Krishna river occur in Ptolemy who describes the delta of the Krishna as *Maisolia* (from Maisolos), the Greek name for the river Krishna.

Nature, too, had been generous to the Andhra country. Two main rivers, the Godavari and the Krishna, with their many tributaries span this "waist" of the Indian peninsula almost from west to east. The Krishna, which forms the western boundary of Nagarjunakonda, is half-a-mile wide at this spot, but, to quote Mr. Longhurst, "in the rains it is a mighty river navigable for country craft right down to the sea".

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\* Erythraen: Literally the Red Sea. Ancient geographers meant by the Erythraen Sea the Indian Ocean, including the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf.



That it was navigable and was used by the sailing craft of many nations is evident from the archaeological discoveries made at Nagarjunakonda\* and at places along the banks of the Krishna. Undoubtedly, many Buddhist settlements existed along the river during 300 B.C. to 300 A.D. These settlements—all of them on the lower Krishna valley—were Goli, Chezerla, Amaravati, Jaggayapeta, Ghantasala, Gummadiiduru, Bezvada and Bhattiprolu. Most of these still exist today as straggling hamlets. Of these, Ghantasala or Kantakasala (known to the Greeks as Kantikassala) was commercially as well as culturally the most important at the beginning of the Christian era. It was the river port at which Buddhist pilgrims from Ceylon, Sumatara and other lands disembarked. It was also the site of a Maha Chetiya (Buddhist relic chamber), and at the same time the greatest emporium of the Krishna delta.

Such then was this region of Andhra-desh in the first three centuries of the Christian era and the first three preceding it. The commercial importance of these river-towns was enhanced by the international fame of the Buddhist institutions which flourished at Nagarjunakonda and the other places.

After the decline of the Maurya empire the Satavahana

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\*Even older than Nagarjunakonda was Amaravati, lower down the river, about 60 miles from Nagarjunakonda as the crow flies, but somewhat longer by the river route. Denuded of its former glory, and with most of its sculptural pieces removed elsewhere and with a few marble slabs and friezes and statuary now housed under a shed with a tin roof and with waist-high walls, Amaravati looks even more forlorn than Nagarjunakonda.



THE BIRTH OF BUDDHA

dynasty of Andhra held sway over a vast territory which comprised the whole of the Deccan from coast to coast, including the present-day Mysore, and extending to Avanti (Ujjain) in the north. The Satavahanas or Satakarnis are referred to in the *Puranas* as the Andhra-bhritya dynasty. The Sadenoi of Ptolemy were in all probability the Satavahanas. Ptolemy speaks of a land called *Arake Sadenon*. The Satavahanas ruled from the third century B.C. to the third century A.D. By the middle of the third century, the Satavahanas were replaced by a number of smaller dynasties. While Amara-vati was famous as a Buddhist university town in the

second century B. C., Nagarjunakonda flourished under the southern branch of Ikshaku kings in the second/third century A.D.

### **The Golden Age of Nagarjunakonda**

The Ikshaku (also known as Ikshvaku) were the progenitors of the Solar royal line of Ayodhya, from which both Rama and the Buddha claimed descent. The Ikshaku line was itself short-lived—only a matter of a century—but during this period its members married into the ruling families of Vanavasa (north Kanara) and Ujjayini. It was under the Ikshakus that Nagarjunakonda attracted the notice not only of the rest of India but also of the adjacent countries.

The capital of Ikshakus was Vijayapuri (Vijyapura). Whether Vijayapuri became known because of its Buddhist university of Nagarjunakonda, or whether it was the commercial importance of Vijayapuri that made Nagarjunakonda famous as a Buddhist centre, is a moot point.

But certain it is that while Vijayapuri was a river-port humming with activity with sailors and merchants of many nations jostling against the Andhras and the Kalingas and the yellow-robed monks of many Asian nationalities, there was even greater activity in the university and the numerous monasteries only half-a-mile from the river wharf.

### **The Wharf**

The well-built wharf was one of those excavated by Mr. Longhurst. Two-hundred and fifty feet long, fifty feet wide, and six feet above the water's edge (as we find the water level today) the wharf was meant, to judge from the archaeological evidence, not so much to facilitate the

export of onyx, gold, muslin, and fine cotton for which the Andhra country was then famous, as to receive the limestone blocks and Planad marble slabs which were required in great quantity for the ceaseless building activity of the monastic establishments here.

That the monks had the last word in civic matters at Vijayapuri and not the merchants or City Fathers becomes evident from the ruins of what must have been a temple not far from the wharf. Some experts believe this to have been a palace. Archaeological evidence apart, and there was nothing to support this theory, it was obvious that no king would have his palace so close to a busy wharf.

A section of the wharf must have been used as bathing steps. The Brahmi inscription, "Asangha," on one of the huge slabs of the wharf leads one to think that the monks did come for their bath to the river instead of having a rub-down in their small monastic cells.

The usual adjuncts of a waterfront are whore-houses, bars and eating houses and places of amusements. The Vijayapuri wharf, however, did not conform to this type.

There was then the river wharf, almost the whole of which has now been excavated, and immediately close to it a temple. When the vandals, who laid waste this and other temples in the valley, erected a Siva-linga where the temple had been, they knocked down one of the carved limestone pillars and used it as a stepping stone.

### **Royal Patronesses**

The monastic order at Nagarjunakonda was strong because it had the backing of the Ikshaku queens. The kings were not professed Buddhists, but the queens and the princesses were. The kings extended their patronage



#### THE GREAT DEPARTURE

to the Buddhist monastic orders at Nagarjunakonda and gave them every assistance in their efforts to make Nagarjunakonda another Nalanda or a Vikramasila. One of the inscriptions at Nagarjunakonda mentions the name of the Ikshaku king, Madhariputa Siri Virapurisadata and that of his father and his son and successor. The inscription goes :

“Vasithiputa Siri Chamtamula

Madhariputa Siri Virapurisadata

Vasithiputa Siri Ehuvula Chamtamula”

Three generations !

But it is the names of the patronesses which occur more frequently and more prominently at Nagarjunakonda. The best-known of the royal ladies is Chamtisiri “who is praised for her munificence in a passage which recurs in not less than nine of the pillar inscriptions belonging to the Great Stupa which was founded (or perhaps rebuilt)

by Chamtisiri in the sixth year of the reign of King Siri Virapurisadata." (Longhurst).

Another Buddhist benefactress was Adavi Chamtisiri, possibly a daughter of King Chamtamula, Siri Virapurisadata's sister. Another name which is mentioned is \*Chula-Chamtisiri-nika. Chula-Chamtisiri-nika is the wife of Mahasenapati Mahatalavara Vasithiputra Khamdacali Kiremnaka. Yet another reference is to Mahadevi Bhatidevi "daughter-in-law of Siri Chamtamula, wife of Siri Virapurisadata, and the mother of Maharaja Siri Ehuvula Chamtamula." (T.N. Ramachandran).

The most interesting name, however, is Bodhisiri. It is obviously a pseudonym designed to hide the lady's rank and identity. The *Upasika* Bodhisiri was a great admirer of the missionary zeal of the Singhala (Ceylon) monks.

While the highest hill overlooking the valley is known as Nagarjunakonda,\*\* Nagarjuna himself is associated with Sri Parvata, a smaller hill where the bungalow of the Superintendent of Archaeology stands, today. On this hill are the remains of two Viharas. a Kulaha Vibara and a Sihala† Vihara.

Evidence points to the fact that the Sihala Vihara had a shrine which contained Buddha relics and the usual *pipal* (Bodhi) tree which is a must in Buddhist temples in Ceylon. According to Longhurst, "the Temple seems to have been founded during the reign of Siri Vira-

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\*Cula (chula) = younger Nagarjuna Hill.

\*\*Konda = hill

†Sihala and Singhala are interchangeable.

purisadata and dedicated to the fraternities of Ceylon monks who are stated to have converted the people of Kashmir, Gandhara, China, Tosali, Aparanta, Vanga (Bengal), Vanvasa (north Kanara), Yavana, Damila, and the isle of Tamraparni."

As Tamraparni was Ceylon, one must infer that the progress of Buddhism there was halted after Devanampiyatissa's conversion by Mahinda (of the Asoka royal family) and that this fraternity of monks revived Buddhism in Ceylon and crossed over to India and travelled far and wide before some of them settled down at Nagarjunakonda where the pious lady built a monastery and a temple for them. The inscription not only mentions Bodhisiri but also refers to the existence of a Bodhi tree in the shrine.

"Sihala vihar bodhirukha pasado"

Bodhisiri deserves the attention of research scholars.

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### **Maha Chetiya : Buddha Relic**

Mr. Longhurst also laid bare the Maha Chetiya erected by the munificence of Chamtisiri and containing, according to Prof. Vogel, who deciphered the inscriptions, relics of "The Lord, The Supreme Buddha."

To quote Mr. T.N. Ramachandran :

"Mr. Longhurst found the relic (probably of the Buddha himself) not in the centre of the Great Stupa (Maha Chetiya) but next to the outer retaining wall to the north. It consisted of a tiny bone in a gold box with lid, which again was contained in a cylindrical silver casket. The latter had been placed in an ordinary earthenware pot which was found broken and the silver relic casket crushed. The relic (*dhatu*) is now worshipped

in the Mulagandhakuti Vihara at Sarnath."

"Probably of the Buddha" is just gratuitous. Neither Longhurst nor Vogel has any doubts about it.

The erection of stupas was a very popular activity of the Buddhists. Buddha himself laid down the rule regarding the various categories of stupas when he said that Buddhas, Pratyeka Buddhas, Arhats, and Chakravartins were entitled to such memorials. Buddhas are those who attain the consummation of evolution but who because of vows made in previous births become World Teachers. Pratyeka Buddhas are those who attain Buddhahood without taking upon themselves the role of Teacher and Reformer. Arhats are those who by practising *Tapasya* in this or in previous births establish control of spirit over matter. Chakravartins are ideal kings (literally world rulers). In Buddhist sculpture a Chakravartin is depicted in association with the "seven jewels", namely, the parasol, the wheel, the drum or jewel, a consort, a horse, an elephant and a minister or prince.

Both at Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda, Chakravartins, Arhats, Pratyeka Buddhas and Buddhas are depicted in the carvings on marble slabs which are invariably used as ornamentation round the base of a stupa.

Maha Chetiyas or Maha Stupas contain a relic or relics of the Buddha himself, while other stupas contain relics of Buddhist Arhats, like Sariputta, Mogallana, and others of whom there were many in the Buddha's life time.

A curious feature of the stupas at Nagarjunakonda, and those at Amaravati (though at the latter place there is today only the circular markings of the foundations) is that they are on the Ceylonese pattern. Though chetiya





#### THE FIRST SERMON

or chaitya is also the accepted term in Ceylon, the more popular name for these mound-shaped structures is Dagabha derived from *Datu-garbha*\*.

The Maha Chetiya at Nagarjunakonda, which was excavated by Mr. Longhurst, was 106 feet in diameter at the base and in its original state must have been 80 feet high. First comes the drum (*garbha*) on the pattern of the Ceylon Dagabha; then the square box-shaped *harmika* ending in the *chatra* or umbrella design at the top of a tapering spire. Of course, neither the Maha Chetiya nor the smaller chetiyas discovered at Nagarjunakonda were intact and complete. But this is the general design of the Nagarjunakonda stupas and it is similar to that of the

\**Datu* = relics. *Garbha* = womb.

Ceylon Dagabhas. But the Nagarjunakonda stupas had one distinguishing feature which is absent from the Ceylon Dagabha or from the Sanchi stupas.

This was the projecting altar at each of the four cardinal points and known as an *Ayaka*. In the case of the Maha Chetiya, the *Ayaka* was 26 feet in length. Supporting, or rather decorating each *Ayaka*, are five slender pillars, and each of the five pillars represents the five chief incidents of the Buddha's life—his Birth (*Janma*), the Renunciation (*Mahabini' shkramana*), the Illumination (*Samyaksambodhi*), the first Sermon (*Dharma-chakkapavattana*), and his End (*Mahaparinirvana*). (It is on these *Ayaka* pillars that the inscriptions in Brahmi about the Ikshaku princesses are engraved).

Thus at each stupa there were twenty historical inscriptions. India is the only country where such a large mass of historical facts can be gleaned from the work of the sculptors. While the chief historical incidents connected with the Buddha were in statuary groups, additional inscriptions were engraved, not on bricks or tablets but on pillars prominently displayed before worshippers who used to make *pradakshina* (going round clock-wise) of each stupa. The *pradakshinapath* at the Maha Chetiya was 13 feet wide. One can imagine the number of devotees going round it, chanting *gathas* (hymns), and stopping to place flowers, incense and other offerings at the *Ayakas*.

Further ornamentation—again ornamentation with a purpose—of the outer surface of the *garbha* of the *stupa* consisted of a series of marble slabs which depicted in bas-reliefs the Buddha story and the stories of the

Buddha's previous births—the *Jatakas*. For example, there is the graphic rendering of the Siddhartha's birth at Lumbini in Nepal.

There is Queen Maya holding on to a branch of the *Sal* tree which bent itself so as to come within her reach. According to a legend she gave birth to Siddhartha standing and in some statuary, chiefly Gandhara, the baby is shown emerging from the mother's right side. At Nagarjunakonda, however, the birth is not shown. Around Queen Maya are *devas*, including Indra, who offered water for the infant's bath. The child is received from the mother's right side by the guardian deities. The legend has it that immediately after his birth, Siddhartha took seven steps. At Nagarjunakonda the *devas* are shown holding a strip of cloth which bears seven light footprints.

Another marble slab depicts the casting of the child's horoscope, and a very realistic picture it is. In another slab the grown up Siddhartha having left his palace and gone to the bank of the river Anoma, is shown cutting his hair with his sword. He says, as he discards the hair, "If I am destined to become a Buddha let it ascend; if not let it fall to the ground." How his hair was caught by the thirty-three gods of the Trayastrimsa heaven and borne aloft are vividly depicted.

Another legend on the marble slabs of the Maha Chetiya at Nagarjunakonda illustrates the *Nidanakatha* of the Gautama Buddha receiving his "initiation" at the hands of a previous Buddha, the Dipankara Buddha, aeons ago. In that life the Bodhisattva was an ascetic named Sumedha who having renounced his wealth and



#### THE MAHAPARINIRVANA SYMBOLISED BY A STUPA

worldly life was doing *tapasya* in the forest. One day visiting the capital, he found the people levelling the road and filling up the ruts and holes. He asked for and received a portion of the road to carry out repairs. Soon after, Dipankara came to his part of the road which had not yet been repaired. Sumedha lay prostrate on the road to enable Dipankara to continue his journey. Dipankara marked him out to be a Bodhisattva and gave him his blessings and predicted that he would be Gautama Buddha.

There is another legend illustrating Asoka's connection with the propagation of the Buddha's teachings. One day when the Buddha was in the Bamboo Grove at Rajgir (Rajagraha), he set out with his alms bowl. Two children were playing on the roadside. One of them was Jaya, son of a prominent citizen, and the other his companion, Vijaya. Jaya stopped the Buddha and put a handful of sand in the Buddha's bowl making believe that

he was offering rice cakes. Touched by the child's piety, the Buddha said that he would be born Asoka.

Another slab shows Siddhartha in his pleasure garden. This illustrates the episode described by Ashvagoshā in his *Buddhacharita*.

Almost all the main *Jataka* stories, including that of Vessantara, in which the Bodhisattva gave away his two children and even his wife are depicted in the Nagarjunakonda bas-reliefs. Besides the Maha Chetiya, Mr. Longhurst brought to light eight smaller stupas, four viharas, six apsidal temples, four *mandapas* (assembly or congregational halls) and the wharf already mentioned. He also carefully removed nearly 500 marble slabs with statuary, carved beams and pillars and Buddha statues, some nearly intact others headless torsos.

Unlike the Amaravati friezes, which were shipped to London where they now adorn the staircase of the British Museum (and let me add where they are not only admired but taken good care of), all the discoveries at Nagarjunakonda are now housed in a Museum. (Some of the Amaravati friezes are in the Madras Museum.)

After laying the foundation-stone of the Nagarjuna Sagar, which when completed in 1960 will submerge the 2,750-acre Nagarjunakonda valley together with all the historical sites and the yet unearthed treasures, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru visited the place on December 10, 1955 and was visibly moved at the prospect of the site. He pointed to the hill, Nagarjunakonda, which overlooks the valley, and desired that during the next four years excavations be speeded up and that a new Museum built on the mountain top to house the contents of the

present one and any other treasures that may be found in the next four years.

A Committee was appointed to advise the Government on this shifting and on other matters pertaining to the work at Nagarjunakonda between now and 1960. The Committee met in April and decided to salvage the entire one votive stupa, parts of slabs and corner angles from existing sites and a few pillars, and of course what the Museum now houses. But this will only be a fraction, of the archaeological wealth that the site contains and Buddhists and those who love the ancient glory of India must visit Nagarjunakonda before it is too late and see for themselves how the people in ancient India carved and wrought and built.

I have written mostly about the stupas ; but it must be pointed out that the stupa was only the devotional emblem of each monastery. Almost the whole area of 2,750 acres seems to have been built up by various sects, each establishment being self-contained.

### Monasteries

Each monastery had many cells for the monks, each cell having an attached bath room and urinal. The urinal must have been for use at night or in rainy weather for it is a *sine qua non* of Buddhist establishments in India and Ceylon that the surroundings must be scrupulously clean. The vast jungle around and the river offered the thousands of monks who lived at Nagarjunakonda all the sanitary convenience that they needed. The urinal arrangement, which then was in use, was hygienic and was connected to a septic tank some distance from the residence.



INDRA'S VISIT TO BUDDHA

Each monastery had a *mandapa*, which was ordinarily used. by monks when they listened to discourses by the elders or held discussions among themselves. On special ceremonial days it was thrown open to the public and discourses were held here and the *Jataka* stories

narrated by qualified priests.

Each monastery thus consisted of separate cells for monks, the chetiya, the shrine room, usually a miniature votive stupa and the *mandapa*.

Within a couple of centuries of the *nirvana* of the Buddha, the Order of Monks split into a number of sects, some on grounds of the interpretation of the Master's teachings, some on points of discipline, and others on such trivial matters as to whether the right or left shoulder was to be uncovered. The chief sect that predominated at Nagarjunakonda was the *Mahasangika* sect which starting from Vaiśālī and Pataliputra spread to Amaravati and Nagarjunakonda. Though the *Mahasangikas* later branched out into *Mahayana* sects, there is no strong evidence to prove that between the second and third centuries there was such a split among the brethren at Nagarjunakonda. The fact that the followers of Ceylon's *Hinayana* sect and the others lived together amicably at Nagarjunakonda indicates that the cleavage between the *Hinayana* and the *Mahayana* had not come to a climax at Nagarjunakonda.

### Nagarjuna

Now about Nagarjuna himself. Tarnath in his history of Tibet speaks of the famous Acharya Nagarjuna who lived at Sri Parvata. Many scholars are of the opinion that this scholar lived at Sri Parvata in the present Nagarjunakonda. The hill, to which by 1960 will be moved the museum and other things which can be salvaged, was used as fortification in the Vijayanagar period. On the hill there are a couple of small Hindu temples and a couple of deep wells, and of course the bastions.



By Nagarjunakonda we mean therefore not only the hill (though Konda means a hill) but also the valley which from the second century B.C. to the third century A.D. was the scene of a great Buddhist culture. It is not certain whether Vijayapuri was internationally renowned because of Acharya Nagarjuna and the Buddhist Brotherhood or the Buddhist Brotherhood received homage and devotion because Vijayapuri was a famous mart and capital. A gold coin of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.) and other Roman coins found at Nagarjunakonda have, however, established the fact that Vijayapuri was visited by the people of Asia Minor, Greece and Rome as well as by those from Asian countries.

A word about the carvings. Except for giving a rough outline of what they wanted and where, the monks left the work to the guilds of masons, sculptors and craftsmen. They were mostly local people, for the features of the figures in the sculpture resemble those of the Andhras and not of the self-conscious Aryans. Each group of artists had its own way of doing things so that there is some dissimilarity in the technique. As would naturally be the case, artists were sometimes allowed the choice of subjects and if an artist engraved the picture of a man dressed like a Scythian it does not mean that a foreign artist executed the job or that Scythians were seething over the Andhra plains. There is, in fact, only one solitary figure of a so called Scythian on one of the slabs.

That the artists were mostly local craftsmen does not mean that they spent their lives huddled around the parish pump. Travel is not peculiar to the twentieth century. In fact, the means of communication that existed between the different parts of India then were extremely good.



SAGATA AND THE NAGA AT THE FERRY

Craftsmen took up work with one employer and then with another, so that the pattern of Buddhist architecture and Buddhist sculpture is on the whole uniform. But to draw the inference that Sumerian and Egyptian influences crept into early Buddhist art is to stretch the point too far. Indian craftsmen developed their natural talents, and in course of time they evolved a typical Indian art. There was an interchange of art motifs between one province of India and another. Havell claims that a part of the southern gateway at Sanchi was "a gift of the son of chief craftsman of Raja Siri Satakarni, one of the Kings of Andhra



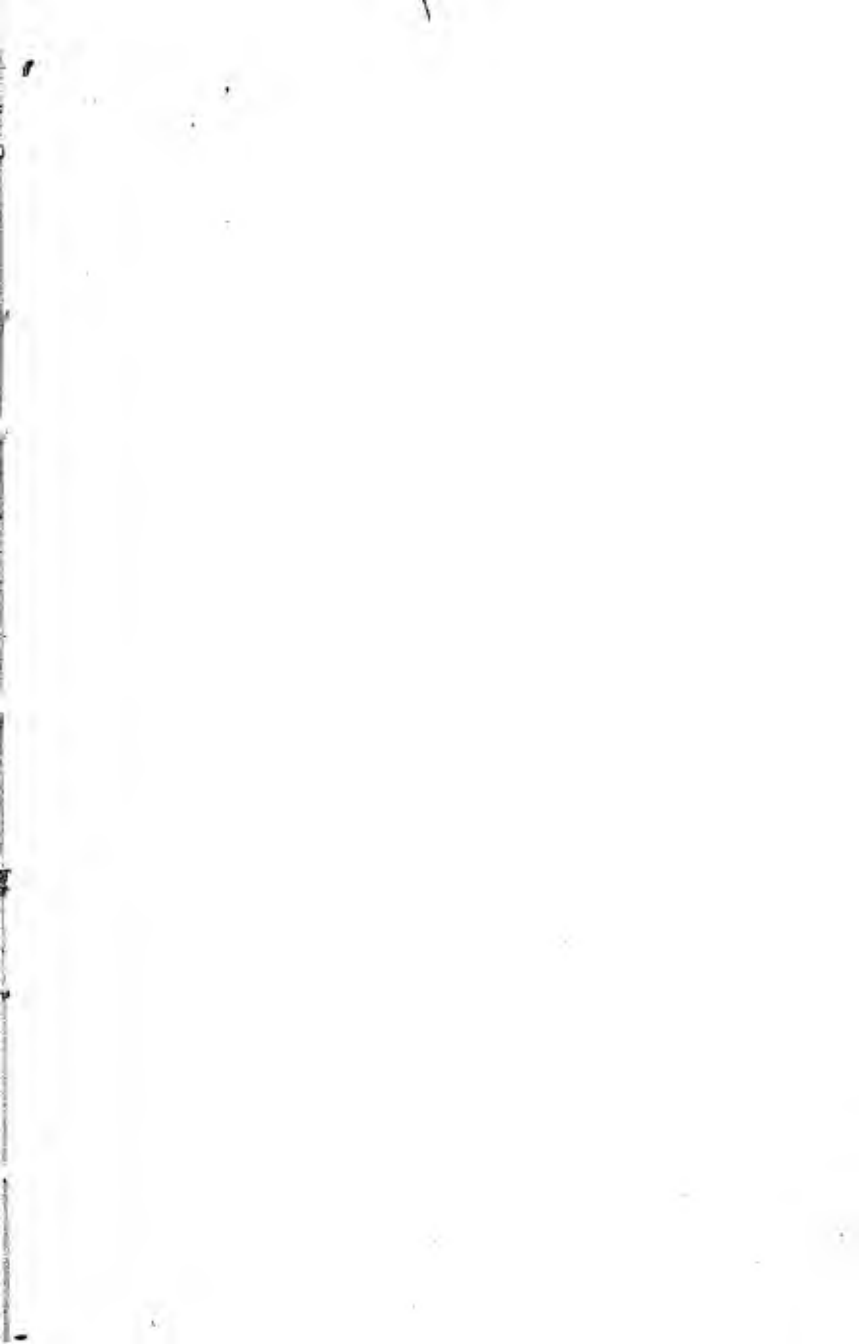
THE DASARATHA JATAKA

dynasty (circa 179 B.C.)”

On the whole, then, Vijayapuri and Nagarjunakonda were the focus of scholars and monks and rich patrons of

Buddhist art. Since a large population lived and carried on scholarly pursuits there and building projects were undertaken, it is reasonable to assume that Nagarjunakonda must have at one time enjoyed a more clement climate than it does today. And the Krishna, knowing that it was safe from dam-builders for another sixteen centuries, must have spread its blessings unstinted over the vast valley that was Nagarjunakonda then.





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